



San Diego City Attorney **MICHAEL J. AGUIRRE**

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 17, 2008

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LOCAL SMOKE SHOP OWNER AND SON CONVICTED OF 23 COUNTS OF SELLING NARCOTIC PARAPHERNALIA

Sentencing is May 16, 2008

San Diego, CA—A jury in San Diego Superior Court convicted the owner of the ABC Smoke Shop, Joandark Kassab and her son Steve Kassab, who is also the store manager, of 23 counts of selling methamphetamine and crack cocaine pipes. Sentencing is scheduled for May 16, 2008.

“Joandark Kassab and Steve Kassab face a potential of over ten years in custody and substantial fines as a result of their convictions,” said City Attorney Michael Aguirre.

San Diego Deputy City Attorney Makini Hammond who prosecuted the case said, “Last Friday’s guilty verdicts covered a two-year period involving several undercover purchases of methamphetamine and rock cocaine pipes by San Diego police officers.”

In July 2006, Steve Kassab was arrested for selling narcotic paraphernalia and a search warrant was executed resulting in the seizure of over 600 methamphetamine and rock cocaine pipes.

According to Deputy City Attorney Hammond, while awaiting trial on these charges, the ABC Smoke Shop continued to illegally sell narcotics paraphernalia even after the Criminal Division in the San Diego City Attorney’s Office sent a formal “Cease and Desist” letter to Joandark Kassab. On December 19, 2007, Steve Kassab was again arrested for selling narcotic pipes as part of an extensive undercover operation conducted by the San Diego Police Department which targeted smoke shops throughout the city.

The ABC Smoke Shop located at 4101 Market Street has been the focus of community anger since its initial opening in July 2005. At that time, a rally was held to protest the sales of narcotic paraphernalia from this establishment. “We’ve been in this struggle for a long time,” said Dr. Cleo Malone, Executive Director of Palavra Tree, a drug rehabilitation program. “We’ve made a great step towards helping to save our young people from drug addiction and I thank the community, police and the City Attorney’s Office.”

This is the second time that Steve Kassab has been convicted of selling narcotics paraphernalia. On December 23, 2002, Mr. Kassab was convicted of two counts for selling and manufacturing “brown bags” or rock cocaine smoking kits from his family’s liquor store, Mr. D’s, immediately adjacent to the ABC Smoke Shop. Steve Kassab’s father, George Kassab, was also convicted of selling drug paraphernalia in 2002.

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